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S E C R E T BAGHDAD 002316

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/24/2018
TAGS: PGOV PREL PINS IZ
SUBJECT: KARBALA: PC CHAIRMAN YASIRI IN TROUBLE

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Don Cooke for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Karbala reporting cable.

¶2. (S) Summary: Widely disliked Acting Provincial Council
(PC) Chairman Abd al-Al al-Yasiri may be removed from his
position shortly. On July 24, a majority of PC members
signed a petition demanding al-Yasiri's ouster, setting the
stage for a removal vote. PC Member Mohsen al-Kenani delayed
a vote on the matter, however, arguing that a vote to replace
the Deputy Governor -- a job to which he aspires -- should
occur first. Al-Kenani is in a strong position to become the
new Deputy Governor. The elevation of Al-Kenani to DG would
likely be positive for both the province and the PRT. End
Summary.

Showdown at the PC

¶3. (S) At the weekly PC meeting on July 24, 22 of the PC's 36
members (the other five members of the 41-member body hold
leadership or executive positions) signed a document
demanding the ouster of Acting Chairman Abd al-Al al-Yasiri.
The petition places Al-Yasiri on thin ice since the PC
Chairman can be removed in a PC vote by a simple majority.
Al-Yasiri, an independent originally elevated to his position
in late 2007, is widely disliked in Karbala and viewed by
virtually all of our contacts as venal and incompetent. Some
here allege that al-Yasiri is in the pay of Iran.

¶4. (S) A vote on the motion to remove al-Yasiri from his
position was delayed by a surprising source: Mohsen
al-Kenani. A well-respected, independent member of the PC,
al-Kenani has been as supportive of the PRT and its endeavors
as al-Yasiri has been a hindrance. Although he currently
shares his colleagues' dim view of the Acting PC Chairman,
al-Kenani was once close to al-Yasiri. Frustration with
partisan politics in Karbala led al-Kenani to criticize and
distance himself from his erstwhile ally, but apparently not
so far that he is unable to use al-Yasiri to win a political
prize: the Deputy Governorship.

A New Number Two

¶5. (S) Contacts tell us that the PC may vote as early as July
31 on the replacement of long-absent Deputy Governor Jawad
Kadhum Husayn al-Hasnawi. A Sadrist who fled to Baghdad in
the wake of last year's Shabaniyah clashes, al-Hasnawi has
not relinquished his office. We surmise that al-Kenani needs
al-Yasiri to remain in place through the vote to replace
al-Hasnawi. Besides al-Kenani, the other leading candidate
for the Deputy Governor job is PC Member Mohammad Hamad
Hashim, a Dawa member, according to our contacts.

¶6. (S) Hashim reportedly is a friend of police commander MG
Ra'd Shakir Jawdat and supported by the Iraqi Police.
However, he is not popular within the PC and, in fact, rarely
attends its sessions. Moreover, Governor Akeel Mahmoud
al-Khazali's Dawa affiliation makes it unlikely that PC
members will approve of a deputy coming from the same party,

thus giving al-Kenani's candidacy a strong shot. Al-Yasiri
for the time being is on what PC contacts tell us is
"probation" pending a vote on his future. Based on his
behavior to date, we suspect he will seek to attach his name
and image to all manner of projects here in an attempt to
shore up his crumbling credibility.

¶7. (S) Comment: The unpredictability of politics here makes
us hesitant to forecast the outcome for al-Yasiri. However,
we are not loath to say that his ouster would remove a large
thorn from the PRT's side. He, more than any other
individual or institution, is responsible for Karbala lagging
behind other provinces in efforts to rebuild and reconcile.
Al-Kenani's elevation, by contrast, could prove a boon for
us. Already a good contact who supports our efforts, as
Deputy Governor he would be in a strong position to remove
bureaucratic and political impediments from our path. End
Comment.
CROCKER